

# COCHINCHINA

Containing many admirable Rarities  
and Singularities of that Countrey.

*Extracted out of an Italian Relation,*  
lately presented to the POPE, by  
CHRISTOPHO BOBBI,  
*that lived certaine yeeres there.*

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*Cum hac persuasione vivendum est; Non sum uni angulo  
natus: Patria mea totus hic mundus est. Seneca.*

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gills, but for as it be of lesse estimation and value then the *Galambes*; yet it is of such account and worth, that one Ships lading of *Aquila* is sufficient to enrich a Merchant all his life. And the best recompense that the King can giue to a Captaine of *Malacca*, is, to trade and traffique with this *Aquila*: by reason that the *Brachmans* and *Banians* of *India*, being accustomed to burne the bodies of the dead with this odoriferous wood, will quickly dispatch and rid him of an infinite quantity thereof.

In conclusion, there are also in *Cochin-China*, many Mines of the preciouslest Metalls, and of Gold especially. So to comprehend in few words the fertility of this country, which meriterh a more larger discourse; I will conclude this Chapter with that which the Merchants of *Europe* that trade thither commonly say, That the riches of *Cochin-China* are greater then those of *China* it selfe; which is knowne to be so exceeding rich and plentifull in all good things.

### CHAP. IIII.

#### Of the Elephants and Rhinoceros.

There are many *Elephants* in the woods of *Cochin-China*; of which they make no vse, because they haue not the skill to catch them and to make them tame; but they haue some brought vnto them from a neighbouring countrey called *Cambogia*, which are instructed and disciplined before. These are as great againe as the *Indian Elephants*, the print of their foot which they leaue behind them, is a foot and halfe in the Diameter: The teeth which come out of their mouthes,

monthes, of which *Iurie* is made, are oft times thirteene, sometimes foureteene foot in length; but those of the female *Elephants* are much shorter: Whence may easily be coniectured, how much greater the *Elephants* of *Cochin-China* are, then those which are brought into *Europe*, whose teeth are not about two foot and a halfe in length.

They are long liued; and thereupon when I once demanded how old one of them was, his Conductor answered me, that he was threescore yeeres old when he was brought out of *Cambogia*, and had liued forty yeeres in *Cochin-China*.

And because I haue travelled many times on *Elephants* in this Kingdome, I can report many things of them which will seeme very strange, but are neuertheless true.

The *Elephant* doth ordinarily carry thirteene or foureteene persons, who are thus in this manner accommodated; Euen as we put Saddles on our Horses, so doe they put vpon their *Elephants*, a kind of Engine fashioned like vnto a great *Hors-Litter*, within the which there are foure scates; and it is fastned and tied with chaines vnder the belly of the *Elephant*, in like manner as the Saddle is with the Girthes to the Horse. This *Litter* hath two entries or open places on each side, in which are bestowed sixe persons, being ranked by three and three; and another behind, wherein two persons are placed; and then the *Nayre*, (who is as the Coach-man or Conductor) placing himselfe on the Head of the *Elephant*, that he may guide and gouerne him. It hath not onely happened vnto me to trauell by Land in this manner, but many times also by Water, passing in this sort ouer some arme of the Sea, sometimes more then halfe a league

from the Land. And to speake truth, it is a miracle  
 that he neuer saw it; to see such a  
 great and huge masse of flesh, loaden with so heavy a  
 burden, to goe swimming, and crossing the waters like  
 a Boate with Oares. True it is, that he made it suffi-  
 ciently appeare, that he suffered much, as well in the  
 paines he tooke to carry the great masse of his body,  
 as for his difficulty of breathing; Infomuch that to  
 ease and refresh himselfe in this great travell, he  
 tooke vp the water in his trunk, and cast it vp so high  
 in the aire, that one might haue thought it had beene  
 some *Whale* of the Sea.

By reason of his great corpulency, it is an extreame  
 difficulty for him to bow downe; and although he  
 must needs doe it, for the commoditie of those that  
 are to goe out or enter into the *Litter*, yet he neuer  
 doth it but when the *Nayre* commandeth him; and  
 if whiles he is so bowed downe, any make too long  
 stay, either in complying with friends or other-  
 wise; he raiseth himselfe on his feet, with impatience  
 to remaine so long in such a violent posture.

It is no lesse wonder, to see how at the command-  
 ment of the *Nayre*, he maketh his body in manner of  
 a Ladder, for the greater commoditie of those that are  
 to enter into the *Litter*: For the first step, he offereth  
 his *Foot*, which is distant enough from ground; for  
 the second he presenteth his *Paierne*, at a convenient  
 distance from the first; and for the third, he boweth  
 his *Knee*: the fourth step, is on the bone of his *Flanke*  
 which is cast somewhat outward for the purpose; and  
 from thence he receiueth you on his trunk, and car-  
 rieth you to a chaine fastned to his *Litter*.

Hereby evidently appeareth, how much they haue  
 bin deceiued who haue written, that the *Elefant* could  
 neither

neither bow himselfe nor lie downe, and that the only  
 way to take him, was to cut the tree against which he  
 was to leane when he went to sleepe: because that by  
 the fall of that tree which was to sustaine and support  
 him, he must of force fall downe without any ability  
 to raise himselfe againe: by which meanes, he should  
 be an assured prey to the Hunter that pursued him.  
 All this is but a fable; although it be out of doubt,  
 that he neuer lieth downe to sleepe: that Situation  
 being so incommodious and violent for him, as hath  
 beene expressed: and therefore hee sleepeth alwayes  
 standing, with a continuall agitation of his head.

In occasion of Warre and Battaile, they take off  
 the covering of the *Litter*, wherence, as out of a  
 Tower, the Souldiers fight with Arrowes and Mus-  
 kets, and sometimes also with Field-pieces; the *Ele-  
 phant* hauing strength enough to cary them: For this  
 beast is exceeding strong, and hath not his like. I  
 haue seene one my selfe, cary excessive burdens on his  
 trunk: Another that lifted vp a great piece of Artil-  
 lery: Another alone to draw ten small Boats one af-  
 ter another, taking them betwene his Teeth, with  
 great dexterity, and casting them into the Sea. I  
 haue seene others, pull vp great Trees by the rootes,  
 as easily as a man would pull vp a *Colewort* or a *Li-  
 tice*: With as much facilitie they will throw downe  
 and ouerturne Houses, beat downe whole Streetes,  
 when they are commanded in the Warres, to endam-  
 mage the enemy, and in Peace, when a House is on  
 fire, that it take not hold of the rest.

The trunk of the *Elephant* is long, proportionally  
 to the rest of his body, so that without stooping or  
 bowing downe, he can easily reach from the ground,  
 what hee list: It is composed of many little nerves,  
 bound

bound, and linked one vnto the other, in such sort, that on the one side, it is so flexible and maniable, that he comendeth and turneth it as he list, to receiue any the least things; and on the other side, it is therewithall, as hard and strong as we haue said.

His whole body is covered with a hard and rough ash-coloured skin: His ordinary trauell, is 12. leagues a day. His motion to those that are not vsed vnto it, bringeth the like incommoditie as they find in the Ship, that are not accustomed to Sea-voyages.

For the Docilitie of the *Elephant*, I shall say more maruellous things, then those which are ordinarily rehearsed: Which will make it manifest, that with great reason it was said by one, *Elephantus belluarum nullis prudensior*; seeing hee doth such things as will giue men iust cause to beleeue, that they cannot see how they should be done, without Intelligence and Prudence.

First then, the *Nayre* vseth an Instrument of Iron about the length of foure hands breadth, with which he doth sometimes beate or pricke him, with a sharpe crooke which is in the end thereof, to awaken him, and make him attentiuie to what is commanded him, yet notwithstanding hee doth ordinarily rule and direct him with words, in such sort, that hee seemeth to vnderstand his language: And there are of them, that vnderstand three or foure, according to the Countreyes where they haue liued. So it seemed that hee on which I trauelled, vnderstood the Language of *Cambogia*, whence he was brought, and that of *Cochin-China*, where he serued. But who would not wonder to see the *Nayre* talking to his *Elephant*, informing him of his voyage, of the wayes he is to goe, in what Iane hee intendeth to lodge, what prouision hee shall finde

find there, and to tell him particularly what he is to doe in all that Iourney thorowout; and that the *Elephant* performeth all with as much punctuality, as a man of sound Iudgement. In such sort, that hauing vnderstood whither he is to goe, hee goeth straight directly thither, without seeking of a beaten way, and without any astonishment, if he meet with riuers, Woods, or Mountaines, but imagining that he shall euery where make his passage, hee passeth through all difficulties: For if there be a Riuier in his way, hee either wadeth, or swimmeth through it; If hee be to passe through a Wood, hee breaketh the branches that hinder him, pulleth vp whole Trees with his trunke, and cutteth off others with a sharpe Iron, made like vnto a Sithe, which for such purposes is fastened vnto the forepart of the *Litter*, and when occasion serueth, hee draweth first the branches and boughes to him, then he taketh this Iron and cutteth them away, making himselfe an open passage through the thickest Forrests whatsoever, whereby men perceiue that the *Elephant* hath beene there and opened the way. All this hee doth easily, and readily to execute the commandements of the *Nayre*. One onely thing this beast findeth incommodious and grieuous, which is, when any thorne or other sharpe thing pricketh the soles of his feete, which he hath very tender and sensible; going therefore but softly, and with great circumspection, when hee is to passe through such dangerous places. I was once on a Iourney, in which there were seuen or eight *Elephants* in company, when I had the *Nayres* each of them aduertising his beast to take heede to their footing, because they were to goe for the space of halfe a League, through certaine sandie places, in which there

were commonly some Thornes growing: At which warning the *Elephants* bowed downe their heads, and looking attentiuely with their eyes, as men commonly doe when they seeke after somewhat that is lost, they went faire and softly, with great heedfulnesse, whiles they were in that danger, till such tins as being told that they were past feare, they lifted vp their heads, and continued their pace as before. In the evening, being come to their Inne, the *Nayres* bid the *Elephants* goe to pasture in a Wood, without taking their *Litters* from their backes: And when I questioned them why they did not discharge them of that burden, they answered me, that the *Elephants* were to feede on the boughs, and bodies of trees, and therefore that they might cut them downe at their pleasure, with the sharpe Iron we speake of, they were to keepe on their *Litters*. The next day, being to lodge in a place where there was no Wood, the *Nayres* brought each of them a great faggot of greene trees for their *Elephants*, I tooke great delight to obserue how one of them with his trunkke tooke these boughs more nimbly then the rest, pulled them with his teeth, and did eate them after with as good an appetite as wee would eate a figge, or any other fruit. The next day discoursing with the other trauellers, being about some twenty persons, I told them what pleasure I tooke in beholding how handsomely this *Elephant* did make shift to feede on those boughes. Whereupon the *Nayre* by commandement of the owner of this *Elephant*, called him aloud by his name, which was *Guin*, who being gone a little aside, presently lifted vp his head, as hearkning what he would say to him: Remember saith the *Nayre* the father the passenger, that was pleased yesterday to see thee eate:

Take

Take presently a truncheon such as thou hadst then, and come into his presence, doing as thou diddest: No sooner had the *Nayre* spoken, but the *Elephant* holding a Truncheon in his mouth, commeth before me, and finding me out amongst the rest, presenteth it vnto me; then peeleteth and eateth it, and doing me a profound reuerence, retireth himselfe as it were laughing, with signes of gladnesse and reioycing: And I remained astonished, to see in a beast so much aptnesse to vnderstand and to doe what was commanded him. Yet is he obedient to none but to the *Nayre* or to his Master, and endureth not to see any other get vpon him; which if any attempt to doe, and he see it, they doubt he would cast downe his *Litter*, and kill him with his trunkke. Therefore when any are to get vp on him, the *Nayre* couereth his eyes with his eares, which are very huge and vnhandsome. When he sheweth himselfe resty in doing what is commanded him, and doth it not so readily as hee ought, the *Nayre* hauing both his feet vpon his head, beateth and chastiseth him soundly, giuing great blowes with a staffe, in the midst of his forehead. Once we being many in a company on an *Elephant* that carried vs, and the *Nayre* beating him in such sort as we haue said, we expected at euery blow he receiued, that hee would haue cast vs downe. They giue him ordinarily sixe or seuen blowes on his forehead, but with such vehemency, that the *Elephant* trembleth every Limbe and Ioynt; yet endureth it with much patience.

There is onely one occasion wherein he will not be ruled by the *Nayre* nor by any man, which is, when on the suddaine he entreteth into Rut: for then being beside himselfe, as if he were mad, he endureth no body,

but taketh his *Lisser* with his trunk, battering and breaking all to pieces. Yet ordinarily the *Nayre* perceiving it a little before, by certaine signes, alighteth off him, and likewise the company; and taking off the *Lisser* from his backe, leaueth him in some close corner alone till his heat be ouerpasse: after which, as if he were ashamed of his disorder, he goeth holding downe his head, submitting himselfe to the blowes and bastinadoes which he seemeth to himselfe to haue well deserved.

These beasts in former times haue bene of great vse in the Warres, and such Armies as came into the field with great bands of them, were much feared. But since the *Portugals* found out the inuention to encounter them with Torches and Fire-brands, they haue rather bene hurtfull then profitable, because being not able to abide those fiery flames before their eyes, they furiously fled away, putting their owne Armies in disaray, killing and ouerthrowing all that stood in their way.

The tame *Elephant* fighteth onely with two sorts of beasts, which are the *Wilde Elephant*, and the *Abade* or *Rinoceros*, for this latter he is commonly two hard, but by the former he is ordinarily overcome.

The *Abade* is a beast which hath some resemblance of the *Oxe*, and somewhat of the *Horse*, and is of the bignesse of a little *Elephant*: He is couered all ouer with Scales, which is to him as an armour; he hath but one horne in the midst of his forehead, which groweth straight, being formed like a *Pyramide*: his feete and hooves like those of an *Oxe*. Whiles I was at *Nouamun* a Towne in the Prouince of *Palucamber*, the Governour went out once to hunt an *Abade*, which was in a Wood not farre from our dwel-

dwelling: He was accompanied with more then a hundred, some on foot, others on horsebacke, with eight or ten *Elephants*. The *Abade* commeth out of the Wood, and at the sight of so many enemies, not onely sheweth no signe of feare, but furiously goeth against them all; thereupon the company diuiding themselves into two wings, the *Abade* runneth through the midst of them, and came to the reeward where the Governour was mounted on an *Elephant*, which sought to take hold on the *Abade* with his trunk, but could not, by reason that the other made so many leapes and friskoles, seeking to pierce the *Elephant* with his horne. The Governour knowing well that this beast could not bee wounded, but where he had no Scales, which was onely in his flanke, watched when in his leaping his belly was towards him; and taking his aduantage, threw a dart at him, with which he pierced him through, which caused great acclamations and shoutings of ioy throughout all his troope, who there presently in the field made a great bonfire of wood, wherein whiles the Scales of the beast were a burning, they daunced and leaped about it; and when, as by degrees, the flesh came to be roasted, they cut out euery one his *Carbonado*, and merrily eate it. Then they opened the *Abade* to take out his Heart, his Liuer and his Braine, whereof they made a delicate dish, which they presented to the Governour, who had retired himselfe somewhat aside to a higher place, where hee sollased himselfe with their iollity. I being present at this piece of seruice, obtained of the Governour, the *Nayles* or *Hooves* for my share, which are esteemed to haue the like vertue and property, that the *Hoofe* of the *Elk* hath. The *Horse* also is thought to be

as soveraigne against poyson, as the Unicornes Horn is held to be.

C H A P. V.

Of the Temperament Manners and Customs of the Cochin-Chinois, Of their manner of Living, Clothing, and Medicines.

THE Cochin-Chinois are little differing from the Chinois in their Countenance, being all of Olive colours; those I meane that are toward the Sea: for the others which are farther into the Land towards Tunchin, are as white as those of Europe. In the lineaments of their faces they are like the Inhabitants of China; flat nosed as they are, with little eyes. They are of a meane stature; neither so little as the Japonois, nor yet so tall as the Chinois; but in strength and agility of body, they exceed them both: They surpass the Chinois also in courage and valour: onely the Japonois surmount them in one thing, which is, their contempt of life in perils and conflicts: for these Japonois seeme to make no account thereof, and to haue no feare of death at all. The Cochin-Chinois is more gentle and courteous in conuersation, then any other nation of the East: and albeit on the one side they stand much vpon their valour; yet on the other side, they hold it as infamous to be transported with choller. And whereas all the other Easterne nations hold the Europeans for profane people, and haue them naturally in horror; in such sort, that when wee land in any of their Countreys, they betake themselves to flight. In Cochin-China on the contrary, they contend

whom shall conuerse with vs most; they aske vs many questions, they inuite vs to eate with them, vsing all kind of Courtesie, Ciuility, and Familiarity. So it happened with me and my companions at our first arriual there; where it seemed vnto vs, as if we were amongst our ancient acquaintance. By which occasion, there is a faire Gate opened for the Preaching of the Gospel of Iesus Christ amongst them..

Of this gentle and pleasing disposition, and of this facilitie of manners, there commeth that great vnion, and good intelligence, which they haue amongst themselves, conuersing together one with the other, as openly, with as much Candour, as if they were all brethren, bred, and brought vp together in the same House, though they neuer saw each other before. And it would be held a great basenesse amongst them, if any should eate any thing, were it neuer so little, without imparting it to those that are with him, and giuing to euery one his morsell. They are of a liberall inclination, and beneficent to the poore, neuer refusing their alms to those that aske it, and would thinke they had failed much in their duty, if they had denied them, as holding themselves bound in iustice to relieue those that are in want. By means wherof, it happened that some strangers making ship-wracke in one of the ports of Cochin-China, and hauing no knowledge of the tongue, by which they might beg what they needed, help their necessity sufficiently by learning this one word, *Doij*, which signifieth, I am hungry: For as soone as they perceiued strangers complayning in such a manner, and crying *Doij* at their doores, they went out all auiue, being touched with compassion, and gaue them somewhat to eat, whereby they got suddenly so much provision, that the King hauing